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Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter, Vol.3, No.01 (January 1976)

Karen Bye

Tom Hurley

Wendy Ashley

Stephen Leo

Stan Fortuna

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Karen Bye, Tom Hurley, Wendy Ashley, Stephen Leo, Stan Fortuna, Deborah Johnsen, Susan Breeding, and Tim Bouffard

DEAR READER,

YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THE MGTF BENEFIT AT THE OASIS BALLROOM ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, FROM 8PM TO 1AM. TICKETS ARE \$3 WHICH INCLUDES A LIVE BAND AND BEVERAGES AT REDUCED PRICES. THE OASIS IS LOCATED AT 195 MIDDLE STREET IN PORTLAND. NEWSLETTER READERS ARE ADVISED THAT PUBLIC SALE OF REMAINING TICKETS WILL BEGIN IN MID-MONTH. HOPE TO SEE YOU ON THE 31ST!

- MGTF BENEFIT COORDINATORS



Maine Gay Task Force NEWSLETTER

Vol. 3, No. 1

January, 1976

MGTF BENEFIT DANCE!!

The MGTF is sponsoring a benefit EVENING AT THE OASIS on Saturday, January 31, from 8PM to 1AM, at the Oasis Ballroom located at 195 Middle Street, Portland. There will be live music and disco, and "Happy Hour" beverage prices.

Tickets are available by contacting MGTF at the office, 193 Middle Street (773-5530), by mail (Box 4542, Portland 04112), or by contacting the Gay People's Alliance of the University of Maine, Portland-Gorham (92 Bedford Street, Portland; 773-2981 ext. 535.)

Checks should be made payable to "MGTF Benefit Dance". The cost of the tickets is \$3 each; the total amount of tickets issued will be limited to 200 -- on a first come, first serve basis. When 200 tickets are sold, the Benefit Committee can issue no more.

If you have never been to the Oasis Ballroom, you are in for a treat!

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GAY PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE REVEALS SPRING ACTIVITIES

By Stephen Leo

The Gay People's Alliance is now preparing its program for the Spring semester at UMPC in the wake of a highly successful fall semester. The GPA has made its presence on campus quite apparent as indicated by the offhand remark by the Student Senate President that it sometimes appears that "half the campus belongs to that Gay group." While this may be a slight exaggeration, it is nonetheless true that the GPA has attracted a large and growing membership.

(Continued on page 2)

More importantly there exists a sense of achievement and Gay camaraderie among the members who attend its weekly meetings. That many close new friendships have developed from these meetings is itself the greatest achievement of the GPA and a catalyst for the group to continue its efforts to reach other Gay people on campus during the next semester.

Perhaps the highlight of the past semester was the Gay dance sponsored on campus by the GPA on December 6. The dance was an unqualified success. The music was good but not too loud for quiet conversation; the atmosphere was lively and friendly, and the people were pleased to have an alternative to the usual Gay scene. The GPA is currently planning a diverse schedule of social activities for the Spring semester including dances on January 17, February 28, and March 20. All dances will be held at 8PM in the cafeteria at Payson Smith at 96 Fal-mouth St -- left hand entrance -- and are open to the public for a \$1 donation.

The big project for the GPA during the Spring semester will certainly be its sponsorship with the MGTF of the Third Annual Maine Gay Symposium on the Portland campus, April 23-24. Symposium III is the first to be held in southern Maine and is expected to attract even more participants than the previous conferences at Orono and Bangor. Activities will include six or more discussion workshops, speakers, Gay entertainers and cultural exhibits, a luncheon, and a dance on Saturday night. Extensive planning for this event has already begun and further details will be published in future Newsletters.

In conjunction with MGTF, The Gay People's Alliance is working to establish a Gay counselling service on campus and in the community. Arrangements are being made to conduct paraprofessional counsellor training workshops within the next few weeks. Also lists of referral agencies and questionnaires have been drawn up. Anyone interested in obtaining informal peer counselling or as serving as a counsellor may call 773-5530, during the daytime. (The university has provided a room on campus for private counselling sessions.) The Gay People's Alliance at UMPG is looking forward to an exciting and productive Spring semester. Future activities of interest to Gay people on and off the campus will be posted in this Newsletter.

Perhaps in the spring or summer, we could organize a gathering to share knowledge: homesteading skills, crafts, occupational possibilities, self-defense, all sorts of things. Each of us has something to share and something to learn. If we can compile our talents and needs, maybe we could begin there.

It seems we need an occasional time and place where we can be a community with something from which we can take home new ideas and learning to explore for our own as taken from others who have experienced it. A periodic refuge, a growth period, would be beneficial to so many of us if we could come together with organization, needs, and goals. Could there be a gathering with workshops? Such as carpentry tools, wood-cutting, herbs, water systems, home money-making endeavors, communal child care, many diverse ideas?

We'd like reactions, suggestions, ideas, about what has already occurred and what others would like to have take place.

For us, one small dream for a gathering has materialized. We have more dreams to work on.

Anne Kinney
Box 104A RFD#2
Buckfield, Me. 04220

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CONDENSED CALENDAR

- 12 Jan. Me. Feminist Health Project course, Augusta. Call 882-7277 or 567-3100 for info.
- 16 Jan. Jade n' Sarsaparilla
- 17 Jan. UMPG Gay dance; Women's Center bake sale, IGA at Maine Mall.
- 19 Jan. General meeting at Women's Center, 7:30PM
- 19 Jan. MGTF Newsletter meeting. At the office, 193 Middle st., at 7:30PM.
- 31 Jan. MGTF Benefit, Portland.

ITEMS, NEWS, OPINIONS, ETC. FROM ALL OVER

WASHINGTON, DC (*Chicago Gay Life*)

-- The Big Brothers, a national organization of men who provide young people with help their parents cannot provide, has adopted a policy requiring potential Big Brothers to sign a statement under oath saying that they are not homosexuals. The DC Human Rights Commission is investigating, calling it "...a slap in the face to Gay people everywhere."

NORTHAMPTON, MASS. (GCN) -- A Lesbian coffeehouse called Sweet Coming has opened here. The coffeehouse, at 200 Main St., will be open Saturday evenings at 8:00pm in order to provide Lesbians with a space to meet each other and share music, poetry, and other creative expressions. Food and drink will be available.

NEW YORK (NGTF) -- NGTF STORY-LINE PROJECT: The networks say they are open to shows with Gay themes and Gay characters, but they don't get the scripts from their writers and producers. We've decided to test their good intentions by submitting story ideas to producers of individual series. Everyone around the country can help, by thinking up ideas and sending them along to us. The idea is to use whatever familiarity you may have with daytime network series by thinking up specific ways in which Gay characters or issues could fit into the format of particular shows. For instance, if a series is about a lawyer, it would be possible to have a case involving child custody by Gay parents. If storyline ideas spring to mind from your experience or news items that you can't readily mesh with any series, send those along too and we can try to think of a series in which it would work. Contact: Ginny Vida, National Gay Task Force, 80 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10011.

MAPLEWOOD, NJ (*Advocate*) -- Watch for the newest invention in restroom surveillance. Carol Products here says that it has a new paper towel dispenser. "One half of the stainless steel cabinet contains paper towels and the other half has a battery-powered camera system," the company says.

NEW YORK (*Portland Press Herald*)

-- Ellen Barrett, an open Lesbian, was recently ordained to the Episcopal church's diaconate. A church spokesperson said there was no question as to the legality of Barrett's ordination because the church allows women to be ordained deacons and because the canons do not prohibit homosexuals from church orders.

TORONTO, ONT. (*Gaylife*) -- Having refused ads for Gay publications, the *Toronto Star* has now made their criteria public for Gay advertising: "The word 'Homosexual' is to be spelled out in full. The word 'gay' is not acceptable, except as in a name of an organization; similarly, the word 'straight' is not acceptable. Advertising on behalf of homosexual organizations where the purpose of the advertising is to recruit or convert, for example, is not acceptable."

WASHINGTON, DC (GCN) -- "I spent four years in San Francisco, playing football, dating women and making love, but not really letting any of my feelings out," revealed Dave Kopay as he became the first pro-football player to come out. Kopay made the public statement about his homosexuality after reading the first installment of the *Washington Star's* recent series on Gay athletes.

SAN FRANCISCO (*Gay Life*) "Join Hands," a Gay male prisoner support group in San Francisco, is about to publish a Gay prisoner's newsletter, consisting primarily of letters, articles, poetry, and stories written by Gay prisoners. For information, write to: Join Hands, Box 42242, San Francisco, Calif. 94142.

ORONO (*Wilde-Stein Club*) -- The Wilde-Stein Club of the U of M, Orono, held its second dance in the last two months on 5 Dec. Like the first dance, this one was well-attended and appeared to bring more than a few people out of their closets (at least for a few hours.) The new faces were encouraged to attend the Club meetings, every Friday at 7pm in the International Lounge of Memorial Union. Everyone - especially those people in the northern part of the state - are encouraged to participate in the W-S Club. The next dance will be in either Feb. or March. Watch the Newsletter for details.

W-SC is considering a radio show, a camping trip, congressional correspondence, rap sessions, and work for Symposium III.

AMHERST, MASS. -- More than 85% of incarcerated pederasts, those adults who seek sexual contacts with young children, are non-Gay, says a pamphlet distributed and researched by The People's Gay Alliance, U-Mass, Amherst, Mass. 01002.

WASHINGTON, DC (GCN) -- Rep. Les AuCoin, D-Oregon, recently joined as the 25th co-sponsor of HR 5452, the National Gay Rights Bill.

Here's the conclusion of Steve Irving's article, which we were unable to include in the December issue.

SEXUALITY AND THE LOVING RELATIONSHIP

By Steve Irving

This strong type of relationship is not to say that either lover will ever participate in sex on the "outside," but rather to say that they could without ruining their relationship. True love is not just a feeling; it is a decision, an attitude, and a promise. Were it just a feeling, there would be no basis for the statement of loving someone forever; it has to be more than that. People change, and if two people are going to make it in a loving relationship, that relationship must be flexible enough to allow both partners to act honestly on their feelings and desires, or to grow and expand with the experiences life offers us all. Any love is doomed to die if it is crammed into too tight a hallway. To live, love must be given room to roam and find its own bounds. Given this, I can assure you that that love will be the most fulfilling and rewarding experience of your life. To stifle a dream or a feeling is to rob the human race of our individuality.

We must all realize that it is human nature to have sexual desires. It is not false to say that just because we are involved in a loving relationship we could feel no desire for anyone else? We have no control over our desires; we merely attempt to control which desires we act upon. For the most part, human beings are adaptable, and we find numerous people attractive. If we refuse to admit this and repress these desires because we are afraid or we feel we shouldn't act upon them, this denial can only have a worse effect on our relationship than the sexual act ever would have. Whenever we repress a feeling it takes a heavy toll. I do not understand how people can be so selfish as to expect complete and absolute sexual dominion over another. We do not expect complete control over the mind; why, then, the body? Are not the two connected? Does not the restriction of one affect the other? Of course it does.

To say that my lover loves me less because he sleeps with another man is cheapening our love to the level of mere sexuality, which it is not. Why do you think that so many Gay relationships are so short-lived? Perhaps it is because the people involved have not come to grips with some of the points I have brought up in this essay. Perhaps they regress to the childish level of holding sex up as some sort of reward, or as a means of getting what they want.

We belong to no one other than ourselves. We share, and two become one on an equal basis of give and take, of love and honesty, of trust and faith. True faithfulness has nothing to do with sexual self-denial. When someone tells me that he loves me and will be faithful, I want to know that his heart and mind are with me -- not just that he parks his body only in my bed! In the end, we realize how much more important the mind is than the body ... the body often is so easy to come by and the mind we can sometimes never grasp. I suppose it eventually comes down to how much honesty and energy people can put into their relationships; if they are willing to be realistic and not overly romantic; if they are willing to try ridding themselves of petty jealousies and the million little fears and misgivings that wreck so many potentially lasting loving relationships.

For if love isn't worth the effort -- what is?

(I've raised a lot of questions in this essay. I would enjoy hearing your opinions and maybe some answers. Feel free to write me: 354 Union Street, Portsmouth, N.H. 03801.)

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SUPREME COURT CHALLENGE TO 'SODOMY LAWS'

(NGTF) In cooperation with Dr. Franklin Kameny and the Virginia Civil Liberties Union, the National Gay Task Force has undertaken a major federal court challenge of restrictions on consensual adult sex. To initiate a court challenge to Virginia law, two men went into federal court seeking a declaratory judgment against the law's constitutionality in that state. On Oct. 24, a three-judge panel refused the suit in a two-to-one split decision. The VCLU and the NGTF now plan to appeal the decision to the US Supreme Court. If the high court strikes down the Virginia law, the laws of the other 37 states will fall simultaneously.

Seems a lot of lavender Down Easterns went to the third annual Gay Academic Union Conference in New York this past Thanksgiving weekend. Also seems like everyone who went wrote about the conference for the Newsletter. Here are three of the articles we received. First, Susan W. Henderson takes a curmudgeonly look at the Conference as a reflection of New York City's Gay factional squabbles. Then Ev Stevens offers some reflections on GAU 3 and Lesbian separatism. Finally, Richard Steinman focuses on what everybody agrees was the highpoint of the Conference: a talk and reading from her own work by Kate Millett.

THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY CURMUDGEON

By Susan W. Henderson

In which, the Curmudgeon goes to
the Gay Academic Union, or, Loretta Lotman,
Won't You Please Come Home

Readers of the MGTF Newsletter will be surprised to hear that Yours Truly has become a separatist. Ayuh, you heard me right. I'm separatin' from New York. If you can make your morning cup of coffee (or your evening glass of beer, if that is more appropriate) last to the bottom of this page, I'll tell you the whole sordid story.

A few of us from the Frozen North made our way down to Fun City on Thanksgiving weekend for the Gay Academic Union conference, hoping to make new friends, find out what is happening in the Movement in other places, and hopefully learn something. The first thing we found was that a group of people were circulating a leaflet deploring the Gay Movement's effort to secure the right of Leonard Matlovitch and other dykes and faggots to pursue the profession of arms, on the grounds that the military has pursued imperialist ends, been used to oppress minority groups in this country, etc. Now a great many of us, if not most, deplore the recent uses to which the U.S. military has been put, and Yours Truly is a pacifist who works for the day when wars and armies will be a thing of the past, but that is not really the point. Human affairs being what they are, there will be armies for a long time to come, and who is to say that the military might not be made a lot less dangerous to democracy by the presence of Gay people, who are not ashamed to love and whose very existence is a challenge to the Machismo so prevalent in the armed services? Besides, as someone in FDR's administration once said, people don't eat in the long run, they eat every day, and the services are one of the few places where poor and Third World people can get jobs. Furthermore, the more people with some degree of progressive consciousness we have in the military, the less danger it will gain power over us. Matlovitch was supposed to speak at the conference, but did not appear. It was probably better for him that he didn't. Some of the Movement people down there have no qualms about publicly humiliating someone they don't like.

Which leads me to the most noticeable thing about the New York Movement -- factionalism. Folks, I'm afraid that we from Down East just don't have it when it comes to factionalism. Down here, a faction is three people having an argument. A while ago, there was a tremendous battle between the Bangor-Orono people and the Brunswick-Portland people about Newsletter policy. Brunswick-Portland won. But what did the Bangor-Orono people do? They kept coming to MGTF meetings, of all things! And not only did they not trash the other people there, but they worked on projects! A lot of the labor on last year's Symposium quilt was done by Bangor-Orono people, and Gay Support and Action sponsored the fine Saturday night Symposium dinner. If those folks were really into factionalism, they wouldn't have showed their noses except to shout down anybody from southern Maine who spoke up.

Now some of the New Yorkers, on the other hand, are artists in the finer points of factionalism. They showed their talents at the entertainment Saturday night at the GAU 3 conference, a play by Loretta Lotman, called Trans-Lesbianic Follies. This play was a good-natured satire on various aspects of the Gay culture -- the cruising ritual, straight psychologists who analyze the bejabbers out of the Gay scene and find deep hidden meanings, usually sexual, every time a Gay person turns a hair, and the sort of zealot who laughs at other women for wearing a dress, makes fine distinctions between "Lesbians" and "Gay women" (the former have nothing to do with men or straight women and are therefore more pure and holy than the latter), and decree

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that words such as "fuck" shall be male-oriented and that anybody who uses them in reference to women shall be booed off the stage. That last character type was a little too true to life for certain people in the audience. They heckled the show to a standstill, and announced that the skit was "oppressive" and they were walking out. They ruined the whole evening. We never did get to hear the punch-line. Now that's real fact-ionalism. Maine Gays just can't come up to it. I hope we never do. Loretta, those nasty people don't appreciate you down there. Come back to New England where your friends are. We may even make you some chicken soup!

* * * * *

NOTES ON THE GAU CONFERENCE

By Ev Stevens

Everybody missed most of what went on at the third annual GAU Conference in New York Thanksgiving weekend. It seemed that we constantly had to choose only one of a dozen interesting workshops. Unfortunately, many of the workshops were actually "panel discussions" or, more accurately, platforms for the academic elite to present their related - but - not - debated, pre-composed views (speeches written the night before, in many instances) on the topics at hand. At times, some individuals did voice complaints that this approach to workshops was a bit too academic and lecture-like, but rarely did a successful group-discussion approach emerge. I base my comments necessarily on hearsay, as I was unable to attend the vast majority of simultaneously scheduled workshops -- so my assessment may not reflect each person's experience. I would simply say that the Second Maine Gay Symposium workshops last spring were more successful and meaningful, on the whole, than those at GAU3.

When Kate Millett finally arrived and spoke, having suffered some time screw-up in communications with the Conference Committee, she drew a big crowd for the second time. The first audience had seemed disappointed when Millett failed to show, having to hear only John Money's scientific discussion of gender identity and the alleged similarities between homosexuality and left-handedness. Prof. Money, of Johns Hopkins, tried in vain to inject some humor into his dry, academic presentation -- one of his big jokes was that male hamsters are normally bisexual whereas gerbils are heterosexual. Another of Money's levities, which produces an ominous hiss from his audience, was that Eve has been portrayed by legend as "a hunk of garbage" torn out of Adam's side. Although Money did present a few interesting points, I couldn't help feeling uncomfortably like a potential specimen, in the audience of one who would make Gay people the object of scientific study. As well-meaning as he may be, any outcome of his studies which would be relevant to my life would only conceivably be some hideous tool of repression, such as a "cure."

Back to Millett...she lived up to my high expectations. Earthy, funny, sensitive, charming, she achieved quick rapport and won the most attentive audience I've ever seen and not heard. Her performance was something not to be missed, partly because it was simply indescribable (she read various scenes of sex from works of poetry and fiction, including her unpublished novel.) I have been high on her ever since reading *Flying*. If you happen to be among the many readers who couldn't make it past the first third or half of that novel, please do yourself justice and pick it up again and persevere. The book will reward you; Kate knows how to do it, in spite of what you thought about the first hundred or so pages.

For us, the conference ended Saturday night, as we had to leave New York early Sunday. After Millett spoke, there was a delightful Vegetarian feast, followed by original theatrical entertainment and finally a dance. Having stuffed ourselves with vegetables and wine, we decided that if we were going to make it to the dance at 10 PM, we'd have to go for a walk and miss the plays. This proved to be a regrettable decision.

The dance was sexually segregated, a fact about which I had mixed feelings. I enjoy all-Lesbian dances and mixed-Gay dances; I rather felt that the latter would have been more appropriate and, for me, a better way to take leave of the conference.

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As the dance was coming to an end, the band's microphone was commandeered by a woman who announced a formal protest to the play "Trans-Lesbianic Follies," which had been presented that evening. The fact under protest was that this light-hearted, farcical treatment of Lesbian sensibilities had been presented before and had been laughed at by, a mixed audience. Apparently some women wanted the opportunity to try (for the first time?) to laugh at themselves, but some couldn't bear to do so in front of men, or to have men laughing at (with?) them. Some felt it wasn't funny anyway; they had their dignity to protect.

And so here came that old bugaboo again -- Lesbian separatism. Earlier in the day, a workshop on Utopian visions had been restricted abruptly to "women only" just a very short time before it was to be held. This move caused an understandably angry reaction from men who had planned to attend, and from others who flinch at any suggestion of the Lesbians doing something exclusive of men. I recall that this same issue came up at Symposium II. It is so regrettable, but I have come to feel that it is symptomatic of our real need for a separate Lesbian movement.

I think we Lesbians need to hold our own workshops, to study and work on our own problems and goals. I am not antagonistic towards the Gay men, and I have no desire to antagonize them (you); I enjoy their (your) company, and I think the general Gay movement needs everybody. But can't we Lesbians have our own separate search for identity, our own workshops and activities? I think we can and must. Perhaps it is counter-productive to try to do this at a conference which is held for all Gays. Perhaps when we all come together we should stress solidarity and eliminate these separate activities. In that case, perhaps we Lesbians should get ourselves together and hold our separate activities at a Lesbian Conference. I imagine the Gay men might want to do likewise.

I don't think Lesbians are making much progress by continually bringing out their dirty laundry in the midst of mixed groups such as NOW and GAU. Let's get ourselves together sensibly and learn to work together. How can we bring the Gay and feminist movements together when we can't even bring ourselves together? So far, we Lesbians seem to be the "problem children", the weak link between the two strong and promising movements. Potentially, we have so much to contribute towards the overthrow of patriarchy and the design of a new world. (no, I didn't attend the separatist Utopias workshop) but so far, we are something of a disappointment. We seem to need a strong, coherent Lesbian solidarity, which could then serve as a flux to solder these movements of liberation together. Couldn't Lesbian separatism be an adjunct rather than an alternative?

* * * * *

THE UNIVERSALITY OF KATE MILLETT'S LESBIAN LOVE PROSE

By Richard Steinman

None of the GAU3 leaders could understand what had happened to Kate Millett. The appointed hour for her appearance at the Saturday afternoon Plenary Session, also featuring Dr. John Money of Johns Hopkins University, had long since passed. Still she did not turn up. A few of us wondered, secretly and enviously, whether, due to her exalted status, she no longer had time for her Gay sisters and brothers. In any event, Dr. Money performed solo, and fascinated his audience with a surprisingly comprehensible lecture proposing a whole new rationale for classifying people's sexual preference -- but more of this, perhaps, in some future issue of the Newsletter.

In the late afternoon word spread throughout the conference workshops that Millett had arrived -- on time according to a prior schedule mistakenly laid down for her by the conference leaders. A special session was hastily set up to hear her in a lounge which, however large, was a fraction of the size of the auditorium originally intended for her address. In consequence, people were pleasantly squeezed together with an air of informality and expectancy.

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Lucky to be seated on the floor five feet away from her, I was immediately disarmed by Millett's warmth, openness and capacity to reach the rest of us. Also, she has tremendous charisma though it is one of her least apparent attributes.

Her theme was straightforward: since Sappho, Lesbians have had to wait a hell of a long time for the re-emergence of a literature acknowledging, much less appreciating their love. In this century all that had been available was an occasional pornographic piece included in the pulp literature for the titillation of guess who. The renaissance had to wait upon Violette LeDuc who, in her Therese and Isabelle stories, wrote poetically of Lesbian love-making. From her work Kate read a generous excerpt. Not only was it superb writing but, to one listener at least, the revolutionary implications seemed clear: to the inheritors of patriarchy it must be unthinkable that women should be able to provide such ecstasy to each other without benefit of the male endowments. Surely this must be one explanation for why Lesbians' literature has been suppressed.

The climax of Millett's oral essay was the reading of a lengthy excerpt from her own current work-in-progress, a novel whose heroine is an older Lesbian. She is briefly reunited in love-making with her younger, female lover who had recently left her to return to her husband.

Along with the rest of the audience I was held simply spellbound: by the strength and wholesomeness of Millett's bearing and voice as she read the most explicit descriptions of sexual love; by her appealing, rounded Irish face, with magnetic, sparkling eyes; and by the utter tenderness and the utter pain which only the true artist can make one feel with no defenses against it.

The writing was fine prose: honest almost to a fault; uncompromisingly descriptive; and terribly moving. Even at the heights of reunion love-making the heroine, ruthlessly honest with herself, notes what is different from the past. For example, the younger woman is willing to be acted upon, but with little or no reciprocation. By contrast, as the love-making continues, there is a lengthy flashback, in which the heroine recalls meeting her lover's plane at the conclusion of a separation which occurred at the height of their love affair. Having commenced the lengthy drive from airport to home, the two are so eager to be reunited in passion that the younger woman suggests taking a motel room near the airport for the night. Unable to wait through the seemingly interminable journey, they do so and, during their impetuous night of love, there is no absence of reciprocation.

But that was past, and the heroine sadly forces herself to honestly recognize that the changes in their love-making, on the occasion of the reunion, inexorably signal the imminent termination of their relationship, once for all.

Throughout her presentation Millett managed to communicate directly with her sisters in the audience, not rejecting the presence of her brothers but, in a sense, passing through them, if at all, to her sisters. Down the ages Gay male love has been recorded to a fare-thee-well. This moment it appeared she had reserved for her sisters. From their tremendously supportive response it seemed clear that they were left in no doubt of it. Accompanied by the men present, they cheered on their sister whose intent it was to insure for Lesbians the continuation of a quality, twentieth century literature, commencing with LeDuc, which bespeaks the ecstasy, the beauty and the bittersweet pain of love -- for Lesbians, as for all people.

Judging from my experience as a male listener, Millett exceeded her goal. Her message transcended the boundaries of sexual orientation. Her prose spoke as tellingly to the experience of love-making and loss of love between two males, or between female and male. Through the medium of her Lesbian love prose, Kate Millett had delivered a universal message.

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JADE n' SARSAPARILLA are featured in a benefit for The Women's Center, on 16 Jan., at 8 PM, the State Street Church. \$3 Advance; \$3.50 at door. For tickets phone the Women's Center 774-6071. That's in Portland.

WOMEN'S WEEKEND IN RETROSPECT

Our invitation to a Gay Women's Country Weekend brought 14 warm women's faces in from the December cold to join the four of us at our old cape farmhouse in Hartford, Maine. By ones, twos and fours, the women arrived: from as far as North Waterford in southern Maine, Farmington to our north and Augusta to our east. Others joined us from Portland, West Buxton, and Richmond, Maine, Portsmouth, N.H., and Townsend, Mass.

For a weekend, December 5-7, we felt the energy and excitement of women who are forging new lives for themselves. Some women, like ourselves, are abandoning city patterns in hopes of airing out, slowing down, and building up in accordance with new dreams. Others are in the process of working out new lives with their women partners and children, tapping previously unknown strengths and talents, and others are struggling to be themselves with openness and integrity in their jobs and careers while challenging old stereotypes about women and Lesbianism.

All our stories were different, but familiar to one another, as we came together from city and rural isolation. "Yes, yes, that's how it was," was heard more than once. Among the 18 of us, two had never before spoken with other Gay women. They joined us with fear and trepidation on Friday night. We saw them off on Sunday with hugs and tears, feeling we had known them far longer than a brief two days.

The weekend was informal and its activities unplanned. Our intent was for a supportive social gathering with a hope for continuing contacts, both written and personal. The time was far too short, but we feel something has begun. During our two days of sharing, we talked and laughed and cried. We sang to guitar music, we listened to records, we hiked up our dirt road. We explored fields and we explored our heads. And we ate. Did we eat! Lots of homemade goodies, much of it homegrown food, was warmed up on our wood stove as we crowded around the long kitchen table on benches and chairs. The talk and laughter of so many Gay women in one household was a high for all of us. "Do you know what it's like to wake up and hear women laughing together?" one woman exclaimed as she sat down for breakfast.

As the women came and went, some staying for an afternoon, others only for an evening, we became aware of our potential for supporting each others' lives. Some of us have music and craft talents, others, gardening and canning experience. Some raise animals and cut their own firewood. Others are building and renovating houses. Skills that could be shared. Could we? Periodic get-togethers? Exchanges? I raise vegetables...she raises beef cattle...she makes maple syrup...she grows plants...

Amidst the dreams and hopes of possibilities that surfaced, though, was the reality that none of us really sat down to pursue specifics. Our enthusiasms were quick. We were ready for more. But basically we talked individually and in small groups. As we all strained to get to know something about each other as quickly as possible, and overcome our shyness, there was no time or space for all of us to sit down together and consider follow-ups. Within the weekend framework most of us found ourselves moving from person to person or group to group or going too quickly from one conversation to another to absorb it all. There was no one group activity, other than meals, that drew all of us together. And even the communal meals included an ever-changing group of women.

So we are left now, musing on the excitement of it all, once again in our own isolation, hoping there will be an ongoing outcome from this women's country meeting in Maine. Although for a brief time we had a glimpse of what a Gay women's community could be (however scattered we are) it seems we need something more for sanity and survival. We each need our own space, but we need each other's support, too. It's what's inbetween that is yet to be explored. How can we support one another -- morally, physically, economically, spiritually, monetarily? Can we come together to help one another? How can ongoing contacts be maintained? It's all too easy to once again resume our individual struggles. We want feedback and suggestions from those who joined us that weekend and we are hoping for participation from those of you who sense some of the same needs for yourselves who were not with us.

(Continued on page 2)

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CORN MUFFIN

By Steve Bull

This month's recipe, Corn Muffin Delight: a pinch of generalization, 10 quarts of revolutionary zeal, and a smattering of reservations.

OUR HOMOPHOBIC culture tells us that there are "good" Gays and "bad" Gays. The Corn Muffin agrees. However, most of society's "good" Gays reside on my shitlist, while society's "bad" Gays are often those with whom I share greater solidarity.

Let's look at some of the socially "good" Gays. They reap many benefits. They get to be on the cover of *Time* magazine (I never said that I was subtle), or maybe they cruise around with the jet-set. They, in effect, enjoy the "good" life. They actively strive toward and succeed in attaining the American Dream.

Then there are the "bad" Gays. These unfortunates are the ones who have to fight for custody of their children; get arrested in public restrooms; exhibit unconventional behavior. They never make *Time* magazine. They remain without power and are far from being accepted by society.

The whole point of this article is to introduce a blatant example of where homophobic America and its Good Gays are poised in battle with the Bad Gays (with whom the Corn Muffin identifies.) The following is a fictional rendition of an occurrence in the Gay movement which pits the Good Gays (hereafter referred to as Pigs) against the Bad Gays (hereafter referred to as Sisters and Brothers.)

Once upon a time there was a Gay Community Services Center, staffed by Lesbians and Gay men and run by a board of directors (doesn't it sound like a Gay version of Exxon?) Well, the Gay workers spent upwards of 40 hrs/wk at the center confronting all of the day-to-day hassles involved with providing counselling and some medical services to a large Gay population. It was common for these Sisters and Brothers to spend 50 to 60 hours a week at the Center. Indeed, the Center became their lives in many ways.

Meanwhile, the Pigs on the Board spent much of their time away from the Center. They were not exactly in touch with the work routine at the Center. To them, the Center was more an additional credit on a list of Gay-lib activities than a way of life. The Pigs were busy being Super Stars in the movement. Periodically, they would descend upon the Center, make the necessary policy decisions and then leave.

One day, the workers petitioned the employers for greater participation in decision-making. The directors were outraged. They cried out -- "This smacks of unionism, which smacks of collectivism, which smacks of communism, which smacks of revolution, which would smack our Mercedes' but good." Needless to say, the insurrection had to be squelched.

So what happens when the Gay workers fight Gay employers for decision-making powers? Simple enough, Gay workers suddenly become the Gay unemployed. A victory for Gay liberation? Hardly. A victory for society's Good Gays? But of course.

Yes, we have our own elite, modeled after their heterosexual counterparts at GM and ITT -- a Gay power structure which is no better than a straight power structure. It constructs class lines, encourages alienation, individualism, competition and sets Gay people against other Gay people (in the form of scabs hired to replace the fired Sisters and Brothers.)

In the present economic picture, I have some sympathy for the scabs. They are also victims of oppression in need of a regular salary. But still, there are "good" victims and "bad" victims, and so it goes on...

(Ed. note: Steve, a graduate of UMO and the Wilde-Stein Club, is attending the Peoples College of Law. For more information on the Peoples College, see the notice on the BITS page.)

"FAGOTS STAY OUT"... When Barney's Beanery, a restaurant and bar in Los Angeles embarked on a campaign against Gay patrons -- a sign was posted saying "FAGOTS STAY OUT" and employees wore shirts with the same misspelled slogan as well as sold them to customers -- a suit was filed charging the establishment with a violation of the California Civil Code which forbids irrational discrimination. In Los Angeles Superior Court, Barney's Beanery argued that their right to free speech was stronger than a Gay person's right to be free from discrimination. The case was then dismissed. An appeal has been filed with the Second District Court of Appeal.

-- from *The Sexualaw Reporter*, Vol1, No.1

LETTERS FROM READERS

Dear MGTF Newsletter,

Although I am not yet a subscriber to the Newsletter, I will be soon. I wondered if you would be interested in printing the enclosed letter to the editors. I have worked hard at it, trying to describe both my feelings and those of my sisters (I am TV.) It's not really right yet, but might be of some interest to your readers as an offering from an even smaller minority of people. If you consider the letter inappropriate for your Newsletter, or suspect the response for publishing it would be very negative, or there would simply would be not reader interest, then I certainly will understand.

The Courage To Be

Many years ago Paul Tillich wrote a little book entitled "The Courage To Be," one of the early U.S. writings in the existential movement. This letter is my own becoming, my almost coming out as it were, for the TV, perhaps even more than most, needs the courage to be. The TV is on the fringes of anyone's community, the Gay as well, I suspect. We are a rarely understood, rarely accepted people, Gay but not Gay, male but not male.

Who am I? I am a woman in my heart, my feelings, interests, even my dreams, and last, but least of all, in my dress. I do not dress for sexual arousal or have a fetish for this or that article of clothing. I am and feel as feminine in blue jeans and work shirt as I do in an evening gown. I love children and am more motherly than fatherly. I do not make excuses for wanting, trying, living as much as possible as a female, and I don't much care how I got that way. I am. I'm OK and you're OK, but am I OK with you? For I am not different than anyone, I want to be accepted, to belong, to enjoy work and life too. What then does a TV really want? To be accepted as a woman by a woman, first, last, and always.

Most TVs are Bi; the psychiatric literature says we are heterosexual. That is true, but they've got the wrong sex and we are first of all Gay female. The deepest attractions I have ever felt have been towards Gay women, and that has little to do with sex and has more to do with a sense of shared identity, common goals and interest. I have dared not expect a mutual understanding or acceptance, for as a TV one learns not to expect much other than rejection behind the screen of politeness. That is fact, not self-pity. What I do know is that I am happy, even proud now of who I am, proud of my feminine nature and trying more every day to

be more feminine in outward appearance.

A TV is not a female impersonator, as in a stage show, a fraud. She is what she feels and in that sense is honest to herself and to you. TVs do admire female impersonators; they're good at appearing feminine. I do not know if they think and feel feminine. I dress as I feel and much more so for other women than for men.

Most TVs are passive in personality make-up and with that gentle and considerate. We may or may not be artistic, creative, imaginative, dull, serious, witty, fat, thin, etc. We are probably more shy, less open at first, certainly more sensitive than many. We still have to be suspicious, a bit more paranoid whereas in some situations, places, groups, you may not need to be anymore.

It occurs to me that some of this sounds like a we-they discourse. It is not intended to be. In fact the TV has far more in common with the Gay person (and is one,) than differences both in terms of life style and society. As purely a beginning, though, I hope that this will help others understand us and let us, as few as we are, be a part of your community as sisters, at least as friends.

Wendy

The following letter, from the Warden of the Maine State Prison, is in response to communications from MGTF's Susan W. Henderson, who is coordinating the Task Force's Gay Prisoners' Project. Mr. Mullaney may, or may not be, a reader of the Newsletter.

Dear Ms. Henderson:

As you may be aware, the policies of the former Commissioner, Mr. Kearns are being reviewed by the present Commissioner. The group policy is among these and is presently undergoing legal review.

As soon as an answer is received at Maine State Prison, I will let you know.

Sincerely,

Garrell S. Mullaney
Warden

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WOMEN'S CENTER OF PORTLAND

OPEN HOUSE

By Deborah Johnsen

Spirits were high and the feeling was womanwarm at the first Women's Center open house on December 1. Some 80-100 sisters and a few men circulated in and out of the new center at 193 Middle Street for a comfortable couple of evening hours of sisterhood and getting-to-know-all-those-interesting-women-you've-been-glimpsing-on-Portland-streets-lately. Spiced with wine, cheese, and punch and enhanced with poetry and song, the evening celebrated the opening of the Women's Center of Portland as "a place where women of every age, race, social class and lifestyle can meet, communicate, express ourselves and learn from each other." Despite the numbers of sisters gathered together (which though unaccustomed in Portland was just wonderful! -- and so, I'll add with blatant bias, was the strong and lively Lesbian showing) and the inevitable unfamiliarity of members in a large new group, conversation picked up rapidly as many newcomers basked in the warmth of sisterly support. It was heartening to see women actively initiating introductions and already fostering a sense of togetherness. The general hubbub was interspersed with fine poetry readings by Miriam Dyak and Lin Mara Bluebird and some strong feminist singing by Areer Hoar, adding immeasurably to the atmosphere of the evening.

The Center is a "grass roots" organization initiated and supported by local women to meet local needs and to serve as a focus of information, counseling, and referrals. Even as a young organization, the Center now offers a variety of services to all women. Available at present are: an abortion fund to lend money to women unable to find help elsewhere; referral service to feminist lawyers, counselors, gynecologists, etc., with fees often based on ability to pay; emergency housing, in collaboration with the YWCA and in individual homes for women in marital or divorce crises; consciousness-raising groups, including new forming ones; and a lending library of woman-oriented books.

On a regular basis, group and individual divorce counseling with professional women from Spruce Run is available Monday evenings from 5.30 to 7.30 PM. Wednesday evenings offer an open woman's rap group from 7.30 to 9 PM. Nancy Willard of the University of Maine teaches a class in self-defense on Thursday evenings at 7.30. And of course, the

Center is open for drop-ins, relaxing, talking, meeting women during the following hours:

MON. 11:30am -- 9:30pm
TUE. 11am -- 2pm; 7 -- 9pm
WED. 7:30pm -- 9pm
THU. 7:30pm -- 9pm
FRI. 11am -- 2pm
SUN. 4pm -- 6pm

The Women's Center is entirely self-supporting, relying on fund-raising projects, membership fees or pledges, and donations of money, equipment, and of course, the the indispensable volunteer time and energy for staffing. Anyone with time to offer to help keep the office open or with anything to donate, please do it -- for all of our sakes. Money for basic expenses has to come from somewhere, but in these hard times, if you really don't have any to spare, a little time and energy will go a long way. Also keep in mind that the Center will gladly share space with other groups for their needs -- we are all too aware of how difficult it is for an oppressed group to get together money, etc. for its own needed space. As of now the Maine Freewoman's Herald uses the Center regularly for layout. Are there any Lesbian special-interest groups out there?

To be put on the mailing list, or if you have any questions, comments, brainstorm, gripes, or just a "hi sister," call or drop by the third floor at 193 Middle St., Portland (774-6071). Mail address: Women's Center of Portland, PO Box 5006 Station A, Portland, Me. 04101. SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL!!

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The Women's Center will sponsor Jade n' Sarsaparilla on 16 Jan. at the State Street Church; 8 PM. Tickets are \$3 advance, or \$3.50 at the door. Tickets may also be purchased at the Center, from 3 - 7 PM, Monday - Friday, or at Erebus and New England Music. Proceeds of the evening will be donated to the Women's Center.

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Q. May a Gay person file an income tax return as a head of household?

A. Yes, there are circumstances in which this may be done, but see a qualified tax adviser.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

-- YOU LOSE --

For the last time, here goes: The Newsletter will collapse if no one "out there" who reads it deigns it necessary to contribute written material regularly, which has been the case since the September issue was printed. WHAT does it take to get the lead out of your collective butt into a pencil and onto paper? The frustration is getting to be too much.

The Maine Gay Task Force is about to lose one of its co-ordinators: me. The "workload" is getting to be too much, particularly since (1) it's a non-paying job, (2) the rent is past-due, (3) my phone has been disconnected and (4) the lights are in jeopardy. "Little things" like food and shelter are now going to take preference over the Newsletter.

Frankly, I'm tired. And practical experience has shown me, the only way to get any semblance of a vacation is to quit -- officially, immediately, unequivocally -- with or without the option to return. The Newsletter won't collapse if I retire. And neither will the Task Force.

So, world...I QUIT. NOW.

--- Karen Bye

Karen is right: the Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter won't collapse now that she has retired, but it will be hard put to find someone as talented and energetic as she to pull the rest of us together. Karen has spent the last few years working much more for the rest of us than for herself. We will miss her, but we understand her predicament.

In the meantime, the handful of us who come out of the woods several nights a month to put together the Newsletter need your help more than ever. We need you to produce each month's issue -- the technical mess-ups on the December number are solid evidence of that. If there were more of us typing, proofreading, doing layout, nurturing the mimeo machine, we would stand a better chance of producing a Newsletter that is legible, clearly written, and attractive.

Even if we had enough staff members to produce a legible, literate, and attractive Newsletter, we would still need your writing to make it interesting. Thanks to the people who have sent in articles -- by the way, if you've sent us something and have not yet seen it in print or heard from us, we're holding it for future use. But we still need more material. We Newsletter freaks have a hard enough time getting it together to produce one issue but given our schedules and locations, it's impossible for us to do monthly news reporting around the state, interviews and book reviews. Nor is it desirable: why should a random gathering of women and men have a market on wisdom, writing talent, or news? You have your opinions to share; you're reading good Gay books as often as we are; you're having experiences that would interest other Gay people.

The Newsletter, after all, is not a Gay Portland Press Herald with a staff and budget to cover all the Maine Gay news that's fit to print. It should not be one group of righteous activists telling the masses what they ought to think. In a very general sense, the Newsletter is a collective effort. Its readers must be its writers and producers. As spread out as we are all over this huge state, in absence of all but a very few bars and even fewer Gay organizations, the Newsletter becomes a central Gay institution, a way for brothers and sisters to get to know each other, a way of keeping faith in long moments of loneliness. The Newsletter is our way of saying to each other "we're here too." But that means you readers must send in writing that tells us how you are, where you are, what you're reading, what your thoughts are on Maine and national Gay issues. We're particularly interested in printing more articles by and for women. Suggestion: anyone want to review Country Women from a Lesbian perspective?

So think about replacing Karen's energy with your own. Even if you can't make it to Portland you can sit down at your own desk in Houlton or Dexter or Fryeburg. What we've heard from in the past is that the Newsletter adds something to your life. Let's not take a good thing away from your life -- and ours.

-Tom Hurley, acting co-ordinator

Gay man looking for place to live with other Gay people. If you're looking for a roommate, contact Richard Thibeault, c/o Box 4542, Portland, Me. 04112.

The drawing on the front of the December issue was done by Tim Bouffard, who seeks additional work. Write the Task Force for info.

A workshop on Lesbianism will be offered by a MGTF woman, Saturday, Jan. 24, from 10am - 3pm at the Deering Bldg., (basement classroom) at the Augusta Mental Health Institute. The workshop, for women health care workers and administrators, will help those persons better understand Lesbianism and to adequately meet the needs of Lesbians in the health care system. For women only, up to 30 in number. Registrants should send \$1 to the Feminist Health Project, 183 1/2 Water St., Augusta.

WIN PRIZES & FAME AT HOME, IN YOUR SPARE TIME! (OH WOW!)

"Slogans USA" is sponsoring a contest to come up with "the official bicentennial slogan." Send your ideas for the official slogan to us at MGTF, and we'll forward them to the Washington, DC, org. responsible for this effort.

The Center for the Study of Human Values is sponsoring a Woman's Mind/Body workshop. Every Thursday, starting 15 Jan., 4:30-6:30pm, at 11 Granite St., Portland. For info. contact the Center at UMPG.

GAYELLOW PAGES - THE USA & CANADA CLASSIFIED DIRECTORY FOR AWARE GAY PEOPLE, includes over 4000 organizations, bars, baths, churches, businesses, and publications -- and much more. Current edition \$5 or write for more details to RENAISSANCE HOUSE, BOX 292, DEPT M, VILLAGE STATION, NYC, NY 10014.

THE LILY TOMLIN "SHIT, HAVE YOU GOT THE WRONG NUMBER AWARD" to William L. Murphy, district attorney for Manhattan, N.Y. Murphy wrote a letter to the warden of Folsom prison (in San Francisco) last month, requesting an interview with an inmate whose name had surfaced in an investigation Murphy was conducting. Unfortunately, Murphy addressed the letter to "Folsom Prison, 1898 Folsom St., SF" and it was duly delivered

to the well-known leather bar located at that address. The owner of the bar responded to Murphy on "Folsom Prison" stationery that features a naked man, a ball and chain, and the logo "Meet the Men." Murphy has yet to reply.

GAY MAN wishes to meet other Gay people (either gender) in Oxford county.

Peter Allen
Box 304 (40 Main St.)
South Paris, Maine 04281

WRETCHED EXCESS: A Gay man in San Diego has come up with a new kind of novelty -- a \$3850 skateboard, complete with a 1.3 carat diamond.

The City of Portland runs a non-homophobic VD treatment center at the City Hall. The service is free, and Roy Tripp, a friend of MGTF, is in charge...

A COURSE TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF body and health will begin Jan. 13 at 7pm. Instructed by Rockie Graham, the course is sponsored by the Maine Feminist Health Project. For details contact them at 183 1/2 Water St., Augusta.

GAY LAWYERS

The people's college of law is a new 4-year law school oriented toward those usually excluded from the legal educational process. Gay people, especially Lesbians and third world Gays are definitely welcome. Entrance requirements are 2 years college leading toward a bachelor's degree, or you must take the college equivalency test. Tuition is low. Graduates receive a Juris Doctor degree and are eligible for the Calif. bar exam. All applicants should be committed to use the law as a tool for social change. Classes enter each Jan. and Sept. For info. write Gay Caucus, Peoples College of Law, 2228 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, CA. 90057.

WOMEN'S COUNSELLING SERVICE - Offers counselling, referrals, and library loans from a pleasant office at 13 Main St., Topsham. Open Mon. and Wed. 7-10pm, Thurs. 4-7 pm and Sat. 10am-1pm. Call 729-4561 Fees on ability to pay.

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